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A sharing period in the first grade can provide children with many opportunities for developing both personally and educationally (e.g., becoming aware of others' attitudes and expressing themselves orally). Moreover, much can be learned by the teacher about students' interests, needs, and abilities when they are encouraged to "brainstorm" such commonplace subjects as rocks or new shoes, or when they share sensory experiences and materials that they have found on their own. For this most "teachable" moment to be fully utilized, it should be scheduled early in the school day while out-of-school experiences are still fresh in the children's minds. Problems of subject matter and personality conflict can be solved cooperatively with the children by evolving informal guidelines--for limiting each child to one subject, for organizing materials, and for listening effectively. (JB)

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THELMA CARLSON

The Sharing Period in First Grade

By whatever designation we may term it—the News, Sharing, or Oral Language Period—it often is, and can become, one of the most important features of the school day. For some first-grade children, voluntary participation in this activity may well represent their first public speaking appearance. Spontaneous speech at this stage is a prime objective and a natural, informal approach is imperative to the full realization of values.

Although the values of the sharing period are innumerable they are of major importance in:

—setting up a friendly, satisfying, vibrant tone for the day
—offering many opportunities to grow in language skills
—contributing to the pupils' development of confidence, status, and better understanding of self and others
—indicating individual and group interests, motivations, purposes, and needs
—offering many opportunities to develop and strengthen democratic values—respect for others' contributions, planning and acting upon own and others' ideas, building personal worth in individuals
—gaining many experiences vicariously
—developing interesting storytelling; news reporting
—developing ability to give directions, describe, explain, think critically, problem solve, plan, evaluate, express self-creatively
—developing an awareness of events in the community and world
—enriching and developing of concepts
—developing pupil leadership
—contributing to vocabulary growth—hearing new words, hearing meanings explained, learning words used in new relationships, and hearing vocabulary appropriate to the subject at hand
—developing speaker-audience responsiveness, rapport
—contributing information, suggestions, and materials for content and activities of social studies, science, and other curriculum areas
—furnishing many possibilities of lead-on independent activities throughout the day; creation of a poem, song or rhythms; story or news writing; illustrating; poetry appreciation; research activity; special recognition for a birthday or sick child; hearing a good story or record.

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Children come from home with a multitude of rich and varied interests and experiences fresh in their minds. They are all ready to share their activities, ideas, information, a curious specimen of consuming interest, a prized possession, or a pertinent contribution to a class interest. They are brimming full of enthusiasm which can challenge and enrich each others' lives.

At the beginning of the school day, while these out-of-school interests are fresh in their minds, they should be shared. What do adults do first when they come together in various types of meeting? In their first minutes they are preoccupied with renewing friendships and sharing news and mutual interests before they settle down to specific purposes. Children are like this too. They are persons with like inclinations and needs. If forced to delay the sharing until later in the day, the original zest is gone, interests have been dulled or supplanted, intended stories are forgotten or somehow have lost their importance, the

live specimen has gone limp, and offerings seem more forced and trivial.

An approximate ten minute time limit needs to be established as daily procedure. In special instances—following a holiday or weekend when pupils have had opportunity for new or unusual experiences, when insatiable curiosity surrounds an interest brought in, when a highly teachable moment is at hand—more time needs to be allotted to the sharing time. In the daily and weekly planning time, the teacher will balance out these time requirements. Sharing time can rarely be construed as a substitute for the daily social studies period and must be held within time limits.

In the beginning it will happen that some children may want to monopolize the time and others will be denied a turn. The children themselves will protest this seeming inequality. This then, is a time to begin to plan how to operate so several children may have a turn. This is a part of the evaluation and is a necessary step in the children's growth. At this stage several points may be considered:

Are there occasions when it is proper and agreeable for one person to use the entire time?

What kinds of stories are of more general interest to the class?

How many things should one generally talk about on his turn?

The children themselves will suggest eliminating long, tedious, involved stories such as retelling a sequence of a usual television or movie story or telling in detail a story from a book brought in. Some will register a sensitivity to certain types of subjects. These are real problems to solve. Teacher guidance through the discussion so children may develop some guidelines is most important. Horror stories and stories involving family privacies are sure to be ruled out. A limitation of one subject per child is usually evolved. Personal organization toward telling the story will sooner or later come into the evaluation. Knowing what one wants to say before he volunteers, having a way of marking ahead of time the pictures he wants to show, having materials at hand and organized in a presentable way are key suggestions children will make.

The guidelines that children have evolved may be written on a chart for future reference. New points may be added from time to time. Some may be considered not workable later on and may be cancelled out after due consideration. Care must be taken, however, that standards are not developed too soon, in a too detailed or rigid manner. Formal structuring of this sharing time defeats the purposes of spontaneous, animated, and productive expression. In such instances the intended values may become secondary to application of the rules, and children's growth along these lines will be impeded.

When a particularly good contribution has been made and the children have been intent and responsive, the teacher may say something similar to, "I noticed each of you was such a good listener. What was there about Don's story that made you want to hear every word?" Sometimes when the period appears to have brought great satisfaction, a look at why it was so enjoyable will testify to the children that their guidelines have been lived up to and are really workable and fine.

Continuous encouragement, guidance, and evaluation are necessary to maintain a high level of performance in the sharing time. The teacher is on the alert for opportunities to ask questions which will stimulate good thinking and will help the children to clarify their explanations. The children are also encouraged to ask good questions. Even as a child may become the sharing time leader, the teacher will be on the sidelines insuring, although unobtru-

sively, that the intended values of the time spent together are being realized.

In classes of children representing meager backgrounds, the teacher will occasionally share an interesting and child-appealing picture and story from a magazine or newspaper, a personal experience they would enjoy hearing about, a new book they will enjoy investigating, a science specimen that they may observe, feel, and ask questions about. She upgrades the discusssion by creating new interests and new awarenesses. She will ask questions and encourage children to come forth with a successful contribution.

There is need for the teacher to have brainstorming sessions around relatively commonplace subjects to see what positives can develop. Many times the offering, "I have a new pair of shoes," is given. To impart this bit of information may, or may not, represent an important achievement for that particular child. The teacher knows in any first-grade classroom new shoes are proudly displayed quite frequently. What extensions of meaning can she help the children to establish around the subject of shoes? Each time the topic presents itself, a new facet of meaning can be added to the concept "shoes." Some of these are:

Size—new shoe size, size of last shoes, proper size for foot health and comfort
Materials—leather, canvas, rubber
Style—saddle, pumps, oxfords, sneakers, *etc.*
Care of—methods applied
Where purchased—shoe store, shoe department of department store, shoe outlet store, drug store, food market, mail order
Why wear shoes? Do all people wear shoes?
Colors
"Pair"—why called a pair, what other things come in pairs
Descriptive comments—how they look to child, how they feel, what they can do
Friction—why new shoes are needed, why soles are slippery when new
Vocabulary of parts—tongue, sole, strings, instep, heel, arch, *etc.*
Tidiness—where shoes are parked at home when a child takes them off, when he goes to bed
Workers who handle shoes—shoe salesman, shoe repairman, shoeshine boy, manufacturer
Where made—factory
Song—Do we know a song about shoes? new shoes? Can we learn a new song? Is a spontaneously created one forthcoming?
Poem—(same as for song)
Story—experiences in shopping for shoes, buying procedures, decision making
Money values—approximate amount of money needed for a pair of shoes (someone may know), differences in prices of leather and canvas shoes, adults' and children's shoes
Creative writing—a chart story, poem or song as an outgrowth of an interesting shoe story or experience
Newspaper of interesting items—shoe story a part of

Around the subject of rocks also many new dimensions of meaning can be added. Examples of these could be:

Many people spend their whole lives studying rocks.
People travel hundreds and thousands of miles to see and photograph pretty and interesting rocks. (Grand Canyon, Mt. Rushmore, Carlsbad Caverns—scenic views would help here.)
Rocks have many textures and colors.
Some people make interesting collections of rocks from all over the world.
Many forces in nature work on rocks to change them.
Rocks are used in many ways around the home.
People decorate themselves with rocks (diamond ring, jewelry).
Rocks fall to earth from space.
Mountains can be built up of hot melted rock.
Fallen trees sometimes change to rock.

The possibilities of adding to word meanings are endless with subjects like "shoes," "rocks," "toys," "flowers," *etc.* Many valuable suggestions present themselves and add profitable lead-on ideas in picture

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research, sensory exploration, and other independent activities.

What can be done with items brought to share with others? Clippings and pictures may be tacked to the bulletin board in a space reserved for them. Some may end up in a book of pictures and articles around a special interest. Some articles, toys, or science specimens may be added to a collection with proper classification and labels. Live specimens will be on display for children to observe, gain sensory impressions and information in various ways. Other science materials may be put in a science center for manipulation and experimentation purposes. Articles brought for dramatic play may go into the dramatic play center. Books and records may be presented to the children by their owners in their own ways, telling a little about the book and showing a favorite picture or two. The teacher will make the determination as to whether the record or book has particular merit for class use for later in the day. A pertinent book may be placed in an interest center or library for use during the time it is at school.

Later in the year, as children give evidence they have developed good letter formation and writing habits and are embarking voluntarily into independent writing, the teacher may manuscript on cards the new words used in the sharing period. These may be placed on the writers' table for use in independent story or newspaper writing.

The sharing period involves such an integration of educational and personal values that it is, or can be, one of the most important features of the school day.

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